February 23, 2011

Dear State Legislator:

The Military Coalition (TMC), a consortium of nationally prominent military and veteran organizations, representing more than 5.5 million members plus their families and survivors, supports the Department of Defense (DoD) State Liaison Office’s efforts in encouraging states to pass legislation to improve absentee voting for military members and their families.

The Military Coalition is pleased that your state is considering adopting the Uniform Military and Overseas Voters Act (UMOVA) which was drafted in 2010 in response to significant obstacles that overseas military personnel and civilians face in exercising their right to vote. These obstacles include difficulty in registering from abroad, frequent address changes, slow mail delivery, inadequate time to return finished ballots once materials are received, ballots and ballot applications that never arrive, difficulty in obtaining information about candidates or issues, the inability to comply with notarization or verification procedures, or the voter’s failure to properly comply with non-essential requirements for absentee materials.

In 2009, the U.S. Congress passed the Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment (MOVE) Act amendments to the federal Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA), as part of the National Defense Authorization Act (FY09 NDAA). Although the MOVE Act was an important step toward alleviating the difficulties faced by these voters, individual state attempts to comply have not been wholly effective in overcoming these difficulties, and the federal laws do not encompass state and local elections. Further, elections are conducted under procedures that vary between jurisdictions, and many are conducted independent of the federal elections to which UOCAVA and MOVE apply. Lack of uniformity, and lack of application to the federal statutes to state and local elections, complicates efforts to fully enfranchise these voters.

UMOVA will significantly assist states in meeting the statutory mandates of the recently enacted MOVE Act amendments, and expands upon those important protections and benefits for covered voters and elections at all levels. The act provides a common sense, state law solution to military and overseas voting obstacles, and strengthens efforts to comply with recently imposed federal requirements.

State support for service members and their families is crucial to the well-being of military families. By adopting this legislation, you are supporting both current and future military families within your state. Thank you for your support of our service members and their families.

Sincerely,

The Military Coalition
(Signatures enclosed)
Air Force Association

Air Force Sergeants Association (AFSA)

Air Force Women Officers Associated

James L. Keig

AMVETS

Army Aviation Assn. of America

Eugene K. Anderson

Assn. of Military Surgeons of the United States

Cesar V. Lopez

Assn. of the US Army

Association of the United States Navy

Colonel B. A. Fairbairn

Commissioned Officers Assn. of the US Public Health Service, Inc

Edward O. Sherwood

CWO & WO Assn. US Coast Guard

Fleet Reserve Assn.

Martha W. Didams

Gold Star Wives of America, Inc.

Iraq & Afghanistan Veterans of America

Peter Reznik

Jewish War Veterans of the USA

Michael DeSantis

Marine Corps League

Marine Corps Reserve Association

Marine Officers Assn. of America

Military Order of the Purple Heart

National Association for Uniformed Services

National Guard Assn. of the US

National Military Family Assn.

Gwen Carver

Non Commissioned Officers Assn. of the United States of America

Lois Burnette

Reserve Enlisted Assn. of the US

Reserve Officers Assn

Society of Medical Consultants to the Armed Forces

Diana B. Holloman

The Retired Enlisted Assn.

I. F. Saramastro

USCG Chief Petty Officers Assn.

Carol B. Carroll

US Army Warrant Officers Assn.

Veterans of Foreign Wars of the US